



Meet **Sabrina**, undercover princess

When Princess Sabrina of the House of Valence is exiled to a dull, working-class town, she must go undercover to keep her royal identity secret. Her parents, the king and queen, have sent her to a tough housing estate to keep her safe from the political mess back home. Sabrina lives with her Uncle Ernie, The Earl of Parslowe, who has trained her to be an epic taekwondo expert. But even he can't prepare Sabrina for Awful Agatha.

The school bully hates Sabrina on sight and the two quickly become arch-enemies. Then, the princess meets her nemesis in a blockbuster showdown that forces them to realise they both have big secrets to keep and are more alike than they would ever admit.

Sabrina definitely has the right skills for a royal, but can she survive against Awful Agatha in the most rotten school in the world?

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N.J. HUMPHREYS

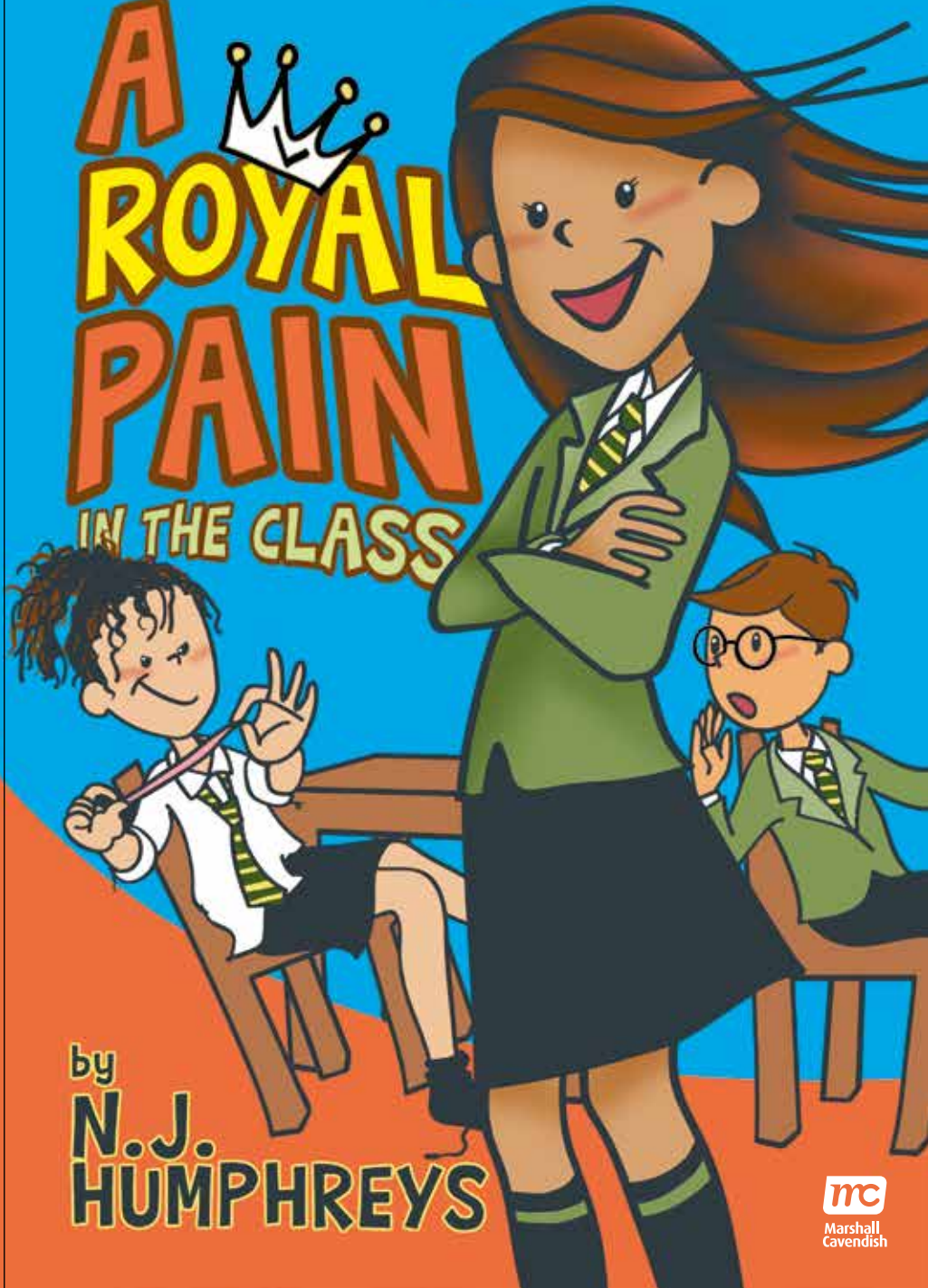


A ROYAL PAIN IN THE CLASS

Marshall Cavendish Editions

Princess  Incognito

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AN INTRODUCTION TO ME

MY name is Sabrina Valence and I'm a princess. That's right. I'm a proper, living and breathing princess. I'm not an animated princess, or a soppy movie princess or a birthday princess at one of those lame parties where all the girls wear frilly dresses and pretend to be princesses. I am the real thing.

I am Princess Sabrina of Mulakating, daughter of King Halbutt Valence and Queen Beverly Sisley. Well, that was my mother's surname before she got married. Secretly, she was psyched to marry my Dad and not just because he was the king. She didn't want to be called Sisley anymore. When she was at school, the other girls called her Beverly Sissy from the House of Sissies. She hated that. She much prefers being Queen Beverly from the House of Valence.

That's the other strange thing. We don't really think of ourselves as the Valence family. Our family is called the House of Valence, which is totally stupid when you think about it because we're not a house. We don't even live in a house. We live in a palace. Or at least I used to live in a palace.

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But I don't want to talk about that yet. I know I'll get that knotted feeling in the stomach, rather like the time Uncle Ernie was teaching me a spinning hook kick in taekwondo and I landed on my belly.

When I think of the Palace, my eyes sting. My mother says a royal princess shouldn't have stinging eyes in public. We always say "stinging eyes" and then we'd giggle together. We never mention the C-word.

Princesses do not cry.

But they do, you know. They really do, especially when they are told to leave the Palace, especially when they are sent away from their family in the middle of the night, especially when they are alone in a strange place with weird people.

Hang on. I'm losing my train of thought.

My tutor used to always go on about my "train of thought". She was a bit mad like that. She said my thoughts were like too many trains travelling in too many different directions at the same time. I had to drive one train at a time and keep it on one track.

See. I told you. She was nuts.

But the funny thing is, I miss her now. Her name was Miss Cruickshanks, but I always called her Miss Quick-Pants because I'd run to the toilet whenever she arrived. We studied for hours in Daddy's enormous office and I

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went to the toilet at least ten times every class just to get away from her.

But I miss the old battle-axe now. I miss them all.

Mostly, I miss being able to tell the truth.

Even this homework is a lie and a total waste of my time. Our teacher told us to write about our family and *illustrate* a family tree. I know she meant *draw* a family tree, but she said *illustrate* instead. She's one of those teachers who throws in big words to show off her intelligence.

The homework must be handed in soon. We've all got to take turns to stand in front of the whiteboard and do class presentations. The title is "My Family And Me". It's not exactly original, is it? Why do teachers always tell us to write about ourselves and our families? It's so predictable.

So I'm basically wasting my time. But I don't care. I'm writing my story anyway, my *actual* story, the real story. On American TV shows, they call this therapy. Well, this is my therapy. I'm going to write the real story of Princess Sabrina of Mvlakating, just for me, just to make me feel better and then I'll lock it away in my bedroom drawer. No one will ever read it, not even my Uncle Ernie. When I'm done, I'll scribble down some fake stuff about living with a mad uncle in a new town and going to a

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terrible school with a wussy teacher who tells me to write a load of old rubbish about my family and me.

That writing will be for my teacher. This writing is for me. This is the real story about a real princess, a princess in disguise, a princess in hiding, a secret princess who just wants to go home, but can't.

This is my true story about living a big, fat lie.



CHAPTER ONE

Daddy called me into the dining room so I knew I'd done something wrong. I never really liked the dining room. It was big and cold and my voice echoed. Other families got their dining rooms from IKEA. Ours looked like a really boring museum. The ceiling was so high that I had to pull my head back to look at all the paintings.

When I saw Mummy sitting beside Daddy, I was absolutely positive that I was in *big* trouble. I think Mummy had stinging eyes. It was hard to tell because they were both sitting at the end of our long dining table. I had never counted the chairs, but I know Daddy's banquets hosted hundreds of very important people. They were really boring people, too.

I walked past the family portraits that hung on the dining room walls. There were so many of them, all refusing to smile, probably because they were stuck in those golden frames. Normal kids kept photos of their relatives on their phones, but my family had to be oil paintings in our dusty dining room.

Mummy *did* have stinging eyes. When I sat down, she was wiping her cheeks with a handkerchief. I had bought her that hankie for her birthday. Actually, Uncle Ernie bought it but I had picked the style and colour.

"All right. What have I done this time?" I asked.

Daddy and Mummy looked at each other and I started to

get really scared. Daddy had stinging eyes, too. Kings *never* have stinging eyes. It's a rule. Kings don't cry. Maybe he had a cold. Yes, that was it. Winter was on its way and the Palace was always freezing, even in the summer.

"You haven't done anything, dear," Daddy mumbled, clearing his throat. He really had a bad cold.

He always called me "dear", too. I found it a bit embarrassing, to be honest. Who wants to sound like a dopey animal with antlers sticking out of its head? The only good thing was the way my father smiled whenever he called me that.

No one ever smiles at me like my father does.

But this smile was a sad smile. His voice was breaking and his eyes were clearly watering. He needed to see a doctor.

"Are you feeling all right, Daddy?" I asked, but I wasn't sure if I wanted him to answer. Not truthfully anyway.

Uncle Ernie always said that a little white lie could sometimes protect a bigger truth. Uncle Ernie really did talk a lot of rubbish. But I wanted to believe him now.

I wanted to hear little white lies from my parents. I wanted them to tell me that everything was going to be all right. But a stupid knot in my stomach was already telling me something else.

"I'm fine," my father replied.

But he wasn't a good actor, not like my mother. She had loved drama at school and once played Cleopatra in the play *Antony and Cleopatra*. I later found out that Cleopatra was the ruler of ancient Egypt. She was practically a queen, just like my mother.

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But her acting was really letting her down now. She was trying to look happy, but she wouldn't win an Oscar for this lousy performance. I thought she was almost going to, you know, do that thing that kings and queens cannot do.

Both of them had trouble speaking. They just stared at me with their mouths open. They looked like goldfish trying to burp.

"Is it about the toothpaste?" I asked.

Mummy shook her head.

"It is, isn't it? I know I keep forgetting to put the cap back on, but I will. And the spitting thing, I know you keep telling me, Daddy. When I spit out the toothpaste, I'll wash it all down the plughole. I promise. Can I go now?"

Daddy leaned forward. "Listen Sabrina, in your history lessons, has Miss Cruickshanks ever talked about the politics of our country?"

"Er, yes, I think so, but it's so boring," I said honestly. "Whenever Miss Quick-Pants, sorry, Cruickshanks, starts talking about old wars and our great-great-great-great-great grandparents, I usually say I need to pee."

"Oh dear."

"No, it's fine, Daddy. I don't really need to pee. I just tell her that when she starts waffling on. In fact, there was one time, when she started going on about Greek gods, I told her I needed to do, you know, something bigger and she went all red, so I managed to sneak off for at least ten minutes. And then ..."

"Sabrina, please. I need you to listen. We are a constitutional monarchy. Do you know what that means?"

“Er, is that something to do with diarrhoea?”

“What?” Daddy bellowed. His cheeks turned redder than a ripe tomato. “Why do you keep referring to diarrhoea and stuff?”

“Well, whenever Uncle Ernie has a bellyache and rushes to the toilet, he says he has a bad constitution.”

Daddy roared with laughter. Even Mummy giggled.

Daddy was still chuckling when he continued his explanation.

“No, a constitutional monarchy is a country that has a royal family, like us, but most of the power is with the politicians in government,” he said.

“So it’s definitely not about diarrhoea then?”

“No, Sabrina. This is about power and control and who has it in our country. The Royal Family doesn’t control the country anymore. We serve our people in different ways.”

“Like when we cut ribbons with scissors and wave from the car window?”

Mummy’s eyes started to fill with water. “Oh, you really are a clever girl.”

“Anyway, as we don’t have any real power to make decisions about our country, some people are wondering if we are still needed,” Daddy continued.

“Of course we are needed,” I replied. “We are the Royal Family. The people need us to wave at them.”

“Not everyone agrees and the bad news is, they are starting to argue about it. These arguments may go on for some time, so ...”

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Daddy stopped talking. He grabbed Mummy's hand and held on tightly. They both had stinging eyes now. So did I. I wasn't even sure why.

"So? So what, Daddy?"

Daddy rubbed his eyes and turned to Mummy. "I can't ... I can't do it, Beverly."

Mummy reached for my hand. "Sabrina, we love you more than anything else in the world, you know that, right?"

"Yes, I know that. But why do I feel scared?"

"You don't need to feel scared. We're going to make sure you'll never have a reason to be scared, because we love you. And because we want you to be safe, at all times, we want you to ..."

"We want you to live with the Earl of Parslowe for a while," Daddy interjected.

I was flabbergasted. "The Earl of Parslowe? Really?"

"Yes, Sabrina."

"Wow. That's amazing ... Who is the Earl of Parslowe?"

Daddy grinned through his tears. "Uncle Ernie," he said. "The Earl of Parslowe is your Uncle Ernie."

"Uncle Ernie? But he lives with us at the Palace."

Daddy shook his head slowly. "No, we've asked him to travel overseas for a while."

"Why?"

"To look after you."

"But why do you want me to leave, Daddy?"

"I don't want you to leave," he croaked. "But I need to save your life."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

N. J. Humphreys is a bestselling author with 19 titles to his name. An engaging, witty storyteller popular with kids, he grew up in London and saw his first work published at 11, when he was picked to read his funny school journal to the world's toughest audience – hundreds of kids from his council estate. They laughed. He hasn't looked back since.

Among his many children's books, Humphreys' *Abbie Rose and the Magic Suitcase* series are entertaining eco-adventures about a smart, feisty girl on a mission to save endangered animals. He is currently working on the animated TV series with an international broadcaster.

He is based in Singapore.